

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 03990 280430Z
ACTION ORM-02

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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UNCLAS KUALA LUMPUR 3990

E.O. 11752: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, SREF, MY, VM

SUBJECT: REFUGEE BOAT SINKS: 33 DIE

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 3969

1. THE BRUNEI-BASED BORNEO BULLETIN CARRIED THE FOLLOWING STORY
IN ITS JUNE 25 EDITION UNDER THE HEADLINE " FOUR SURVIVORS TELL
OF NIGHTMARE AT SEA".

BEGIN TEXT:

LABUAN. THE FOUR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO SURVIVED THE SHIPWRECK
IN WHICH 33 OTHER PEOPLE DIED ARRIVED HERE WITH A HARROWING TALE
OF A NIGHTMARE AT SEA.

2. ALL THE WAY FROM VIETNAM, ONE SAID, THE PEOPLE ON THEIR
FISHING BOAT HAD EXCHANGED IDEA ABOUT WHAT THEIR NEW HOMES WOULD
BE LIKE--AND THEN CAME DISASTER. THE BOAT HIT A ROCK
IN KIMANIS BAY LATE AT NIGHT, DURING A HEAVY RAIN SQUALL.

3. "THE WAVES WERE POUNDING THE BOAT AND THE FOUR CHILDREN ON BOARD
WERE CRYING WITH FEAR," ONE SAID. "THEN IT WAS AS IF EVERYONE
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PAGE 02 KUALA 03990 280430Z

EXPECTED A TRAGEDY. SUDDENLY THERE WAS A PANIC." THE FOUR WHO
SURVIVED SAID THEY WERE 30 HOURS IN THE WATER, THE WOMAN AMONG
THEM CLINGING TO A PLANK AND THE THREE MEN HOLDING ON TO TWO
EMPTY JERRYCANS.

4. IF THIS IS SO, THE BOAT MUST HAVE SUNK ON THE THURSDAY
NIGHT, JUNE 9, NOT ON THE FRIDAY NIGHT AS MENTIONED IN LAST
WEEK'S REPORTS FROM KOTA KINABALU. FISHERMEN PASSING PULAU

TIGA, BETWEEN HERE AND KOTA KINABALU, FOUND THE SURVIVORS ON SATURDAY MORNING AND TOOK THEM TO PAPAR HOSPITAL.

5. THE SURVIVORS SAID ONE MAN HAD JUMPED INTO THE SEA WITH HIS TWO-YEAR-OLD CHILD IN ONE HAND AND A JERRYCAN IN THE OTHER. AFTER SOME TIME THE CHILD DIED BUT THE MAN REFUSED TO PART WITH ITS BODY. AFTER ABOUT EIGHT HOURS HE TOO DIED OF SHOCK AND EXHAUSTION.

6. THE WOMAN SAID SHE HAD BEEN MARRIED FOR ONLY SIX MONTHS AND THAT HER HUSBAND WAS AMONG THE DEAD. NONE OF THE SURVIVORS COULD GIVE A COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE TRAGEDY, HOWEVER. IT WAS SO DARK AND WET AND CONFUSING, ONE SAID, THAT THEY COULD NOT SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO OTHER PEOPLE. ONE SAID THERE WERE NO LIFE JACKETS ON THE BOAT, WHICH HAD EARLIER CALLED AT A SARAWAK PORT AND WHICH WAS ON ITS WAY TO THE PHILIPPINES.

7. A ROYAL MALAYSIAN NAVY SHIP HAD ESCORTED IT NORTH FROM SARAWAK INTO INTERNATIONAL WATERS, AND THE DISASTER CAME ONLY A FEW HOURS LATER. TUK I.M. YUSOF KHAN, THE SABAH POLICE COMMISSIONER, SAID LAST WEEK WHEN ANNOUNCING THE DISASTER THAT THE BOAT HAD BEEN IN POOR CONDITION.

8. THE FOUR REFUGEES HAVE BEEN SENT TO PULAU PAPAN, THREE MILES FROM LABUAN, TO JOIN 109 VIETNAMESE WHO HAVE BEEN LIVING IN UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 KUALA 03990 280430Z

A MAKESHIFT CAMP THERE FOR ABOUT A YEAR.
MILLER

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